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Development of a method for identifying the processes of contact and confluence as defined by Gestalt therapy theory.

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Development of A Method for Identifying the Processes of Contact and Confluence as Defined by Gestalt Therapy Theory

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Abstract

Development of a Method for Identifying the Processes of Contact and Confluence as Defined by Gestalt Therapy Theory

by

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The primary purpose of the present study was to establish a means of observing behaviors that identify contactful and confluent functioning as defined by Gestalt therapy theorists. In Gestalt therapy, contact and confluence refer to polar end points along a continuum that describes how people organize their self-experience in relationship to their environment. First, partner dyads performed a Gestalt awareness exercise to obtain videotaped samples of experiential organization in an interactional context. Then, Gestalt therapy experts selected relatively pure segments of contact and confluence from these videotaped samples. Last, independent raters scored these samples on a form that described 15 specific behavior categories which had been derived from literature descriptions of contactful and confluent functioning. These data were subjected to a series of t-tests to determine whether the ratings of the 15 specific behavior categories differentiated contact from confluence. The results of these analyses indicated that only one of the 15 items, "Interpersonal Risk," significantly differentiated contactful from confluent functioning. In addition, only the "Interpersonal Risk" category together with that of "Use of Speech" discriminated contactful from confluent functioning in a discriminant function analysis. The results of this study fail to support earlier work that examined how

contact and confluence can be operationally defined and measured. Several factors of possible relevance are cited that may explain this failure and may facilitate future research. First, there are indications of the effects of a social desirability rating error. Second, items that were chosen for the rating scale may not have been described in adequate detail to enable the raters to discriminate the subtle behavioral differences between contact and confluence. There are also questions regarding the determination of adequately "clear" or "pure" samples of contact and confluence.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The Focus of the Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to establish a means of identifying observable behaviors that comprise contact and confluence as described by Gestalt therapy theorists. These constructs define the end points of a continuum of functioning that describes how a person is organizing and regulating his or her ongoing experiential functioning. While contact and confluence have been recognized as central to Gestalt therapy theory, there have been few research studies designed to examine these constructs. This is not a matter of an outstanding omission in the development of Gestalt therapy theory but rather it is typical of Gestalt therapy literature. Gestalt therapy theory has not been carefully developed and little research has been carried out in this area (Dollivar, 1981; Harman, 1984; Simkin, 1978). The lack of emphasis on formal theory and on systematic research is due, in part, to the fact that Gestalt therapy theory began as a basis for a therapeutic approach to be used in clinical practice rather than as a comprehensive theory of personality. The early Gestaltists were most concerned with developing and describing new clinical methods and specific techniques rather than attempting to demonstrate the scientific validity of the concepts which they were using (Harman, 1984).

Not only have Gestalt therapists been clinically oriented, but they have been negligent in describing theoretical constructs because

theorizing itself has been viewed by them as a diversion from directly focussing on how people actually go about their experiential functioning. Concepts and constructs that are used to "explain" human functioning have been referred to by Gestalt therapists as "inventions" that do not help in therapy, and attention to theory has been seen as interfering with focussing attention on actual processes of functioning (Smith, 1976). Moreover Perls, the principle founder of Gestalt therapy, was critical of the rigid dogmatism of the established schools of psychology and he opposed formalizing Gestalt therapy theory (Perls, 1969; Fagan & Shepherd, 1970).

In addition to the considerations posed above, it is possible that in focussing on the process by which individuals actually function, the early Gestalt therapy theorists were faced with the very difficult task of conceptualizing in terms that were comparable to other theoretical frameworks. While previous psychological theories focused on <u>why</u> individuals behave as they do, that is on presumed causes, Perls attempted to explain <u>how</u> individuals function, focussing on processes that are active and changing as functioning procedes. This was a radically new approach for which little precedent existed in the psychological literature. Perls and his colleagues appear not to have found existing scientific models that could be used to clearly, consistently and systematically describe their radically new approach to human behavior (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1986).

Although contact and confluence are central constructs in Gestalt

therapy, they generally have been described in clinical or phenomenological terms rather than in terms that would lend themselves to operational definition and systematic study. These constructs are derived from an underlying theoretical conception about how people are continually engaging in a process of experiential self-organization. However, in Gestalt literature they generally are used to refer to what is occurring in a therapy session from the perspective of a therapist's observations. For example, the term contact is applied when people are noted to be aware of their feelings, whereas confluence is used as a general description of a process that is occurring when individuals are not aware of their feelings. In addition, contact and confluence are used by therapists to refer to different ways in which individuals "reach" or "engage" their environments (Stephenson, 1975). Contactful functioning refers to the individual functioning as recognizing the environment relatively "clearly." Confluent functioning refers to a blurring of the distinction between the individual's self-experience and what the person attributes to the environment. Gestalt therapy practitioners advocate that individuals focus more directly on appreciating immediate concrete experiences in order to sharpen distinctions between self and environment. In the present study consideration is given to the theory in general, but the main focus is on specifying and examining these central constructs of contact and confluence.

Theoretical Background

Gestalt is a German word that has no direct English equivalent but means a unique and whole configuration. Whereas the term was chosen to describe a key aspect of human experience, it also seems remarkably appropriate in describing the theory itself as a new integration.

As noted earlier, the person who is recognized as the founder and primary developer of Gestalt therapy theory and practice is Fritz Perls (Latner, 1973; Zinker, 1977). Perls proposed a new perspective that made use of and went beyond earlier theoretical approaches. Gestalt therapy utilizes aspects of psychoanalysis, Reichian analysis, existentialism, Gestalt psychology and Eastern philosophy. While all of these perspectives influenced Perls, he did not merely combine various elements from them. Instead, he used components from each to create a new and comprehensive psychological theory.

Summarizing Gestalt therapy's perspective, Smith (1976) described the primary tenets as follows: (1) a focus on present functioning rather than on the past or future, (2) a focus on what is concretely expressed rather than what is conceptualized, (3) a focus on immediate experience as opposed to talking about or discussing abstract references to feelings,and (4) a focus on the client taking responsibility for his or her feelings, thoughts and behaviors. The focus on experiencing in the present and taking full responsibility for ones thoughts, beliefs and behaviors underlies the Gestalt emphasis on the importance of awareness. In order for people to recognize and assume responsibility

for self-experience, they must become aware of how they are creating their ongoing functioning.

Perls emphasized the importance of awareness as central to "change and growth" (e.g., Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1951; Passons, 1975). Awareness is attained and enhanced through focussing attention on present functioning, especially with respect to how the individual recognizes how he or she disregards or avoids recognition.. of ongoing experience that is aroused and unsatisfied (Perls, 1947). For example, a man must first become aware of the sensation of his thirst and then he must consider what is available to him in the environment (e.g., water) in order to satisfy this need. This basic formulation is extended to functioning in general: a person's awareness of his or her needs is seen as the critical variable in how he or she recognizes and acts on meeting physical and psychological needs and fulfilling them in the context of possibilities available in the environment.

In order to fully appreciate the importance of awareness in Gestalt therapy theory, it is necessary to examine the concepts of organismic self-regulation, field emphasis, and boundary processes. Each of these concepts may be appreciated as describing awareness in terms of its contextual functions. These concepts will also be described in order to show how contact and confluence are derived from basic Gestalt therapy theory.

Organismic self-regulation. Perls noted that the functioning of people can be viewed in terms of how they organize their immediate

experiential functioning (Perls, 1948). He became intrigued with the Gestalt psychology principle that a strong "gestalt" has a greater tendency to closure and stability than a weak one. That is, a perceptual configuration varies in the quality of it's clarity and cohesiveness. This idea became incorporated into his principle of organismic self-regulation. Organismic self-regulation refers to the assumption that the individual is continuously striving to attain an equilibrium. The equilibrium is disturbed by the arousal of needs and regained through their elimination or gratification (Perls, 1947). The concept of organismic self-regulation was specifically adapted from Gestalt psychology's "Law of Praegnanz" which states that individuals maintain "the goal-directed tendency to restore cognitive equilibrium after a disequilibrium has occurred in the perceptual field" (Smith, 1976, p. 26). For Perls, "cognitive" is broadened to "experiential;" rather than referring only to the perceptual field, he assumes that the disequilibrium is one of whole or organismic functioning.

However, the process of organismic self-regulation does not assume that need satisfaction is guaranteed. Although individuals regulate themselves in order to fulfill needs, they limit themselves by their own restrictive ways of functioning as well as being limited by the resources available to them in the environment. The premise underlying the principle of organismic self-regulation, as this principle was labelled, is the notion that individuals are capable of adaptive functioning, but as they function within restricted formats and are

relatively unaware of how they are engaged in such self-limiting functioning, they create and maintain maladaptive behavior. In order to illustrate how self-regulation influences adaptive functioning, Latner (1973) provides the following example:

> ....In the course of his maturation, a tall boy may learn to stoop his back and shoulders to avoid humiliation and embarassment. His perception is that his environment will not support him if he stands up to his full height. His posture, of course, is poor, but given what he feels are the circumstances, it is the best that can be managed. Organismic self-regulation does not ensure health, only that the organism does all it can with what is available (p. 19).

Gestalt field emphasis. The Gestalt psychologists had referred to a field to describe the manner in which the individual is continually functioning in relationship to the environment (Smith, 1976). That is, self-regulation occurs in relationship to the environment and its possibilities as they are recognized in a self-referential manner. Perls and the other Gestalt therapists followed this view but emphasized the ongoing fluctuating character of the field. In this formulation, experiential processes and corresponding behavior are viewed as functions of a currently existing field which is defined as "the totality of the co-existing, mutually inderdependent factors of the person and the environment at the moment of the behavior" (Smith, 1976, p. 26).

Thus, the individual cannot be understood in isolation. Analysis

of any behavior must begin with the situation as a whole; any recognized "parts" of experience are actually embedded in the whole. Moreover, the field concept refers to the unity of the organism and the environment. "...[T]he relationship between the organism and its environment is a critical one. The organism and the environment comprise an interdependent unity in which the organism is striving to regulate itself....The organism is embedded in the environment, as much a part of it as a spoke is to a wheel" (Latner, 1973, pp. 19-20). In essence, the field position as developed in Gestalt therapy, states that the environmental possibilities are always considered by the individuals from within their self-referential perspective as they are in a process of organismic self-regulation. To take the example of a man who is thirsty, he will have some perspective of the opportunities open (to him) to satisfy the sensation of thirst (e.g., water, juice, etc.) in order to fulfill his need to quench his thirst. In an interpersonal context, individuals "see" and "hear" the functioning of other people from within their current ongoing experiential functioning. They recognize (or fail to recognize) possibilities for need satisfaction depending on how they "read" the environment. Circularly, they "read" the environment in terms of how they are responding to their current "sense" of what the environment will "allow."

Boundary processes. The field has been defined as the relationship between the organism and the environment and special attention is focussed on this relational quality in terms of a boundary process (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982).

As has been noted earlier, in the Gestalt therapy perspective, special attention is directed to how a person distinguishes what emerges as self-experience and what is recognized as "out there." The process of creating and recognizing this distinction is referred to as a boundary process. Gestalt therapy's emphasis on boundary processes is partly derived from Buber's existential notions of I-thou and I-it relationships. According to Buber, in the I-it relationship, at least one of the individuals is treated as if he or she were an object, and the relationship is characterized by unilateral decision making. By contrast, the I-thou relationship is marked by mutual cooperation and the co-existence of two individuals in a reciprocal dialogue (Smith, 1976).

The early Gestalt therapy theorists expanded on Buber's I-thou and I-it concepts to create the "I-boundary." The I-boundary refers to behaviors, feelings and thoughts that an individual distinguishes as his or her personal point of reference as discrete from characteristics that are enmeshed in and embedded in a process of global attribution to another person. Polster and Polster (1973) described boundary processes as the experience of the "one" in relation to that which is "not one." The boundary (or I-boundary) determines the ideas, values, behaviors, etc. in which an individual might fully engage "...with both the world outside himself and the reverberations within himself that this engagement may awaken" (Polster & Polster, 1973, p. 108). Thus, the boundary process governs the style of one's life, including

one's choice of friends, work, geography, fantasy, lovemaking, and all of the other experiences with are psychologically relevant to his existence" (Polster & Polster, 1973, p. 9). The boundary process represents what ideas, behaviors and values an individual will and will not recognize as he or she functions. How individuals recognize their environments and the choices that they make in order to fulfill their needs will depend upon the flexibility or rigidity of their boundaries.

Recent Theoretical Developments: Redefinition of Contact and Confluence

It is important to note that the ideas that have been described represent an approach to or perspective of human functioning but they had not been formulated in a carefully developed, formalized theory of Gestalt therapy. As the literature on Gestalt therapy theory has grown, Gestalt theorists have focussed on certain assumptions that are offered as general principles. The primary focus of much of the writing in the area of Gestalt therapy concerns the development of clinical application (Simkin, 1970). In describing therapy as an applied approach, Gestalt theorists have written very little about their basic theoretical position or how a particular technique is supported by theory. It seems correct to say that Gestaltists have not been inclined to engage such issues as consistency, comprehensiveness, and the validity of the premises that are employed.

Recently, writers such as the Kaplans (Kaplan, et al., 1985; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982) have begun to examine the underlying premises of Gestalt

therapy theory in an attempt to find a consistent theoretical base for the theory. Since the purpose of the present study was to operationalize the Gestalt therapy constructs of contact and confluence, it is important to examine recent theoretical advances in the theory that may lead to clearer and more discriminating ways of operationalizing these constructs.

One of the theoretical problems that emerges out of Gestalt therapy's formulations is how organismic self-regulation, field process, and boundary functioning can be brought together in an integrated framework. According to the theory, the organism is continually active and all aspects of its functioning are simultaneously active. However, Gestalt therapy theorists apparently have been unable to conceptualize a framework that would describe an ongoing "whole" of activity in which these various functions are embedded. The difficulty is of critical concern in terms of an attempt to define the processes that are involved in ongoing human functioning.

Earlier Definitions of Contact and Confluence

Earlier Gestalt therapy theorists have defined contact and confluence in various descriptive ways. Perls, et al. (1951) described contact as the forming of a figure of interest against the context of the organism/environmental field. Contact is viewed as a recognition that is clear and vivid; there is a clear image, or insight, and motor behavior that is described as rhythmic, energetic and graceful (Perls, et al., 1951, p. 231).

Contact is often described in terms of excitement that results

from increased self-awareness. The following statement illustrates this kind of definition of contact: "In all contacting, there is an underlying unity of perceptual, motor, and feeling functions: there is no grace, vigor, dexterity or movement without orientation and interest; no keen sight without focussing; no feeling of attraction without reaching, etc." (Perls, et al., 1951, p. 417).

Contact is described as involving both a "...sense of one's self...", and also the sense of whatever "...looms at the contact boundary..." or even "...merges into it. Customary rules are out, and artful decisions become a necessity..." (Perls, et al., 1951, p. 103). Contact has also been described as a dynamic relationship that occurs at the boundaries of two clearly differentiated figures of interest (Polster & Polster, 1973). Contact is characterized by mutual respect of opinions and tastes. Disagreements are seen as exciting possibilities for increased awareness (Perls, et al., 1951).

Confluence, on the other hand, has been described as a lack of recognized differentiation between people. When there is not a clear sense of self and others, there is only a vague development of the figure/ground relationship, relatively little awareness, minimal excitement and therefore, minimal contact (Perls, et al., 1951). In the words of these authors:

> Persons who live in unhealthy confluence with one another do not have personal contact. This, of course, is a common blight of marriages and long friendships. The parties to such confluence

> cannot conceive of any but the most momentary difference of opinion or attitude. If a discrepancy in their views becomes manifest, they cannot work it out to a point of reaching genuine agreement or else agreeing to disagree. No, they must either restore the disturbed confluence by whatever means they can or else flee into isolation (Perls, et al., 1951, p. 121).

Sulking, withdrawing, being offended or becoming hostile are ways in which individuals can act out confluence. In confluence, the person attempts to adjust himself or herself to the other person or attempts to have the other person change. In the former situation, the person becomes a "Yes-man" who needs proof of his total acceptance. In the latter case, the individual becomes a "bully" who attempts to get the other person to bend to his will (Perls, et al., 1951).

Thus, confluent relationships are typified by feelings of guilt and resentment. These feelings can increase confluence by leading others to try to avoid guilt and resentment by excessively trying to please others (Polster & Polster, 1973). If an individual sees himself or herself as capable, he or she will perceive environmental opportunities that will maintain his or her perception of himself or herself as a capable individual. An individual who sees himself or herself as capable will perceive the environment as being more amenable to change. From these descriptions, it appears that Perls and his colleagues have a "sense" of what they are referring to and they try to convey their impressions in emphatic and colorful language (Perls, et al., 1951). But these descriptions do not lend themselves to clearly definable

operations.

Recent Development of the Constructs of Contact and Confluence

Is the difficulty in arriving at a clear, concise definition of specific processes due only to the neglect by Gestaltists of engaging in concise theorizing? A rather different possibility is offered by recent theorists who suggest that there is something about the theory itself that has contributed to this problem. Kaplan and Kaplan (1982; 1985) suggest that Gestalt therapists have found it difficult to conceptualize ongoing holistic organizational processes that are continually changing yet maintaining organizational integrity. These writers have suggested that an ongoing process perspective reflects the radical nature of Gestalt therapy theory and implies a non-linear basis. As used in this context, the term non-linear is used to describe functioning in non-cause and effect terms and in language that describes processes that are simultaneously and mutually interactive (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1985). According to this conceptualization, the usual linear constructs that other theories offer do not apply to Gestalt therapy.

Research involving linear constructs calls for the observation of discrete "events" and evidence of a class of such events is taken as evidence of a corresponding causal agent within persons. In a non-linear theoretical perspective this kind of "event" specification is not possible and thus it is not possible to describe the kinds of "operations" that define such a class.

The Kaplans have suggested that Gestalt concepts can be defined

in a clear and testable manner when their non-linear basis is recognized, that is, when the process basis of the concepts are operationalized. They have suggested that an organizational whole can be understood to be functioning as a self-maintaining systemic whole that is continually relating self-referentially to its environment (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1985). In this perspective, a person is seen as existing as an ongoing and continually changing experiential organizational process that is continually regulating itself. Hence, the ongoing process of functioning is self-referential as well as self-maintaining (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1985).

This perspective may be seen as applying to how individuals perceive and relate to other people. People perceive themselves, each other, and the field, self-referentially, that is from within their own current self-organization. For example, if a man observes his wife from his own organizational process of "anger" he is unable to see that his wife has a "hurt" expression on her face (an aspect of the field) as he talks with her. This current boundary of the man's awareness could be "expanded" if the man were able at this moment to perceive that the look on his wife's face also included "hurt" (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982).

Using this method of defining constructs in terms of ongoing holistic activity, the principles of organismic self-regulation and boundary processes of awareness can be seen as defining how the whole of functioning is currently organized. From an organization of the whole perspective, Kaplan & Kaplan (1982) derive various aspects of contactful functioning. Contactful interactions are those involving

a process of mutual discovery and active exploration of experience. The contact process involves taking risks when encountering new experiences. Confluent functioning, on the other hand, is exemplified when individuals see or hear others in terms of familiar, a priori, expected, restricted formulations.

Contactful and confluent functioning can be seen as defining a range or continuum of an organizational process. One end of this dimension (defined as contact) describes functioning that is characterized by recognition, discovery, exploration, and change as a person functions in a flexible and optimally adaptive manner. The other end (defined as confluent) is exemplified by functioning that is restrictive and rigid as a person functions within a relatively narrow framework of self-organization (Kaplan & Kaplan,1982). In an interactive context, when one individual is functioning confluently, he or she acts on the field in a manner that "supports" confluent functioning in the other individual. Likewise, if an individual interacts with another by taking risks or exploring ideas, his or her functioning supports contactful field processes in the other individual (Kaplan & Kaplan,1982). The following example illustrates a confluent interaction:

> The husband momentarily turns aside, his body seems to sag and his face takes on a sad look. A moment later he straightens up, his face now takes on a 'hard' look, and he resumes rebuttal and attack.

> The wife's eyes moisten in a way that appears to express sadness but the husband does not notice, or if he does, he sees her 'glaring' at him. She herself does not seem to be attentive to her own sadness as she quickly retorts to her husband (Kaplan, Kaplan & Serok, 1985, p. 691).

In this example, the husband and wife relate to each other in ways that appear narrow and restricted. The husband perhaps never noticed that the wife's eyes moistened as the couple is engaged in a pattern in which each person "sees" and "hears" from within his or her own ongoing processes of experiential organization. Thus, the husband and wife are interacting in a mutually supportive, self-maintaining manner. They do not take the risk of seeking possibilities for changing their relationship and so they mutually maintain their ongoing confluent functioning.

Contrast the above with the following example of contactful functioning:

> Two friends meet, exchange greetings, and begin to chat in a casual manner. At one point, one friend looks at his colleague and notices a worried, haggard look. He feels inclined to act as if he has not made this observation. After all, his friend has said that he is well and has not provided an opening for such a personal observation. However, he tells himself that this is a good friend, one whom he is concerned about. He weighs outcomes and "risks" by saying: 'Jim, you look a bit

> low. Is everything o.k.?' His friend seems taken aback, hesitates, and seems about to deny any problem but seeing his friend's concerned look he sighs and says, 'I guess I am upset and worried,' and then proceeds to confide in his friend (Kaplan, et al., 1985, p. 691).

In this example, one participant can be described as venturing to "risk" and simultaneously providing his colleague with the support necessary for him to take a "risk" and to confide. Thus, contact refers to any interactive process in which the participants function in an exploratory manner, in which they are "open" to each other, and where they move progressively toward a willingness to explore unrecognized or unexpressed thoughts and feelings. Contact is characterized by a recognizing and "letting go" of previously held assumptions through the appreciation of one's own active participation in creating one's personal experience, thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

The New Field Perspective

As indicated above the more recent Gestalt theorists have begun to focus on the ongoing whole of the organization of experience process. In this framework a person's process of regulating experience is simultaneously one of self-organization and of relationship of self to context. That is, the ongoing manner in which each person is regulating himself or herself also involves the degree of contactful or confluent functioning that occurs in the interaction. In this view, contact and confluence are seen as embedded in the ongoing organizational

process. As the holistic organizational process shifts so do contact and confluence. The experience that two (or more) individuals have during an interaction is seen as continually changing as the interaction progresses so that the individuals can, for example, be contactful at one moment and confluent at the next moment in a mutually interdependent manner (Kaplan & Kaplan,1986).

This perspective develops the field concept somewhat more broadly then previously. Earlier Gestalt thinkers, such as Perls, formulated the field in terms of how each individual was functioning as an individual. He or she was recognized as relating to his or her environment but there was no allowance for a mutual process in which two (or more) people could have an ongoing mutual effect on one another. One difficulty with this limited perspective was the Gestaltists did not develop the field concept as relevant to group or family therapy. As the Kaplans point out (Kaplan & Kaplan,1982, 1978; Kaplan, 1978), various applications of Gestalt techniques to family and group therapies came about but no method was developed that used the field concept directly as an ongoing process perspective.

This more recent view of a field as involving mutual processes has been described by Kaplan & Kaplan (1982) as resting on systems theory. A system can be described as a relationship that is continually changing so that the whole is different at different points in time yet retains its holistic, organized quality. The whole maintains its organizational character or else it would cease to exist as an ongoing

process entity (Keeney, 1979; Dell, 1982; Leupnitz & Tulkin, 1980). Using a systems approach, the following example describes how experiential functioning is viewed as a process that is actively engaged in interactional functioning in the immediate environmental context (based on Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982):

> As her husband sits quietly by, a mother speaks to her teen-age daughter in a wary probing manner and the girl "bristles" at what she perceives to be her mother's insinuations about her behavior. "Something" is occurring between these two that they experience as familiar. We can say that each restrictively "sees" the other (projects) and also that each experiences herself restrictively (introjects) and these restrictions mutually maintain an immediate "stuckness" in their current relationship. However, in a field view, this activity is understood as embedded in a broader context. Mother's self-organization is at this moment embedded in the field and may include how she "sees" her husband as subtly supportive of the girl's resentment. Mother experiences herself in a field in which she feels isolated and in which she has no support for recognizing her aloneness and her vulnerability. The family members' functioning may be portrayed as their clinging to current field supports. Each participant perceives from within his or her immediate self-organization, and that organization is currently embedded in and supported by the whole field.

The support processes of the field are seen here as maintaining an immediate, temporary stability among the participants. At any other point in time the family described here may be supporting a different field organization. While the family appeared to be functioning in a stable manner in this illustration, they later appeared to be organized differently (i.e., with greater closeness, warmth, and caring). A field has a contemporary stability. It can change its organizational character from a restrictive format to a less restrictive one (or from a more flexible to a more restrictive process). To the extent that the field is organized restrictively at any moment, it supports the participants in maintaining their restrictiveness and each individual is supported in maintaining a "split or non-integration" of functioning that is embedded in how the field is organized at the particular moment (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982).

This view of a holistic process of experiential organization opens the way for observing how the "whole of a person functions as embedded in the immediate environmental whole, the context referred to by Perls as the field" (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982, p. 79). When restricted functioning occurs in the field, it is supported by restricted functioning among the individuals involved: "From an individual perspective these stability seeking processes may be recognized as the 'manipulations of an individual;' in the field context these processes are recognized as mutual support processes embedded in the field" (Kaplan,& Kaplan, 1982, p. 79).

Operationalizing the Contact-Confluence Continuum

As has been noted, earlier descriptions of Gestalt therapy fell short of a formalized, comprehensive theory of human functioning. An analogy that seems appropriate are the maps that were produced by early explorers of a new land. These maps often show a loose collection of specific areas that have been discovered, but they are incompletely or inaccurately connected to other areas. In the earlier Gestalt therapy writings, the major components of organismic regulation, field processes, and boundary functioning were recognized, but the core of the theory that would provide a cohesive framework for these constructs had not been adequately developed. As noted above, some later developments have provided a means of integration. Kaplan & Kaplan (1982, 1985) have added an organization of experience construct that they suggest allows the Gestalt perspective to be viewed as a comprehensive, holistic framework.

In this development, the constructs of contact and confluence are viewed as not merely one or another way that the person functions and relates to his or her environment, but as expressing how an ongoing holistic organizational process is functioning. Thus, contact and confluence describe a dimension that reflects the quality of functioning in which a person engages as he or she maintains an ongoing process of experiential organization. This process is described as functioning holistically so that contact and confluence are reflected in all aspects of ongoing functioning. Since the present study focussed on attempting to operationally define contact and confluence, the bearing that these

new theoretical developments have on these constructs will be examined.

Rather than addressing specific clinical or phenomenological concerns in what may be described as a piecemeal basis, the dimension of contact/confluence can be developed in terms of a comprehensive perspective of organizational processes. This perspective can be summarized as follows (derived from Kaplan, et al., 1985):

a. A whole of experience is continually being organized. The organism is organizing and regulating itself as it knows how. These processes may be described as being organized along a range of familiar and known format to unfamiliar and novel constructions. At the confluent end the person uses highly familiar modes while at the contactful end the person is engaged in relatively creative organizational processes.

b. The familiar/novel dimension represents a risk quality. As the organism functions along familiar, known paths, it clings to experiences that are predictable and anticipated as safe. While as exploration proceeds along unknown paths of organization, the organism is functioning in a risking manner.

c. Ongoing functioning is being self-regulated. Functioning in terms of familiarity and low risk, people are relatively unaware of how they are actively creating their ongoing functioning (confluence). They can be increasingly aware of their own processes as they recognize their own active participation is what is occurring (contact).

d. Self-recognition involves assumption of responsibility. With greater self-recognition for their active role in how they function, people assume a greater sense of self-responsibility and "owning" of self-experience (contact) but with less awareness there is a lesser degree of self-responsibility and less "owning" (confluence).

These formulations of contact and confluence are more fully and comprehensively developed than the earlier descriptions provided by Perls, et al. (1951). Contact and confluence are seen as terminal points of a more basic organizational dimension whose specific attributes have been developed and clarified. The refining of the more specific attributes is an important and necessary precondition for operationalizing these processes.

In summary, earlier Gestalt therapists describe contact as a process not unlike awareness. Contact is defined as the ability to focus attention on what is happening at any given moment. Early Gestalt therapy writers discussed contact as a basic boundary process between figure and ground (Perls, et al., 1951; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1985). Confluence, on the other hand, seems to be defined as the lack of self-awareness about what is occurring at any given moment in time (Perls, et al., 1951).

More recent Gestalt therapy theorists (eg., Kaplan & Kaplan, 1985; Lesonsky, et al., 1985) would not reject the way the early Gestaltists described contact and confluence. However, the more

recent theorists define these concepts in a more encompassing framework that involves an organization of experience perspective. Thus, contact refers to the process of how a person is functioning as an organization of experience process and is simultaneously involved in active engagement with the environment. This perspective involves an examination and exploration of experiential boundaries. Contact is thus seen as a mode of self organization that allows recognition of how one is organizing and how one is attempting to reorganize his or her experiential boundaries (Kaplan, et al., 1985). Confluence is then seen as functioning in which individuals organize their experience of themselves by resorting to their familiar assumptions or formulations about themselves "...rather than by engaging in a process of exploration and discovery at the moment of relating" (Kaplan, et al., 1985, p. 689).

Both earlier and more recent Gestaltists describe contact and confluence as opposing processes on an experience continuum. Also, both earlier and later emphasize the "here and now", immediate present of the contact experience as opposed to the more routinized, low energy associated with confluence. Later Gestalt therapy theorists differ from earlier Gestaltists in describing how a person "is both experiencing and creating self-experience" (Lesonsky, et al., 1985, p. 42). Early Gestaltists described contact in terms of an individual being aware whereas later Gestaltists define contactful functioning as how the individual is "...organizing self as the active experiencer of ongoing processes" (Lesonsky, et al., 1986, p. 42).

Noting the difficulty that earlier Gestalt therapy theorists had in identifying the nonlinear basis of their theory, we find that later Gestaltists were able to expand upon the earlier definitions of contact and confluence. In essence, later Gestaltists accepted the basic (early) Gestalt tenets, of holism, importance of immediate experience, etc., but provided a more complete (nonlinear) theoretical support for how these processes occur (and how individuals organize their experience).

Research in Gestalt Therapy Theory

We have indicated that the early Gestaltists largely neglected the formulations of the essential conceptual foundations of their theory as they focussed on the application of new therapy techniques (From, 1984). For reasons described earlier, this focus did not situmulate a great deal of research in the field. Harman (1984) recently reviewed the literature on Gestalt therapy research and found that the published articles fell into five categories: (1) the effect of Gestalt "marathons"; (2) an analysis of the "Gloria" film; (3) outcome studies comparing Gestalt therapy with other therapies; (4) doctoral dissertations; and (5) an analysis of specific Gestalt therapy techniques. Harman's evaluation of this range of research is rather pessimistic. He suggests that little of it actually examines or tests Gestalt ideas. He focussed attention on the last category that involves research designed to study specific Gestalt therapy techniques, such as the two-chair technique (Greenberg, 1983; Greenberg & Rice, 1981).

Greenberg's Studies

Greenberg (1983) and Greenberg and Rice (1981) found that the two-chair technique was a valuable Gestalt technique for clients, leading to a greater depth of experiencing and greater conflict resolution. These studies examined the specific technique and in pursuing this goal they developed a means of observing ongoing functioning from an experiential perspective. Although this area of research does not directly explore the nature of the constructs and processes that Gestalt therapy assumes, the methodologies that are involved do begin to address this concern. Greenberg (1983) and Greenberg and Rice (1981) translated earlier methods of measuring experiential processes into the kinds of observations that Gestalt thinking would presumably make. For example, the study by Rice, et al. (1979) developed the Client Vocal Quality Classification System as a process instrument that examines aspects of interpersonal interactions such as perceived energy (which includes volume of speech), accent (which examines pitch), and terminal contours (which focuses on vocal energy). Greenberg's research used this classification system as a means of focussing on the way in which individual experiential processes proceed as opposed to how the content of what is expressed is studied.

Lesonsky's Study

Lesonsky, influenced by Kaplan & Kaplan's (1982) descriptions of Gestalt therapy theory in general, and of contact and confluence in particular, attempted to operationalize the concept of experiential

boundary processes. This section discusses Lesonsky's research as it was described in her masters thesis (Lesonsky, 1983) and in a later publication (Lesonsky, Kaplan, & Kaplan, 1986). The goal of Lesonsky's research was to develop a boundary process scale that would examine moment-to-moment shifts in functioning that could be classified along a five point scale of the contact-confluence continuum. Because Lesonsky's work is an important precursor to the present study, her work will be examined in detail.

Following the theoretical developments put forward by the Kaplans (1982, 1985), Lesonsky specified specific qualities of functioning along a contact/confluence continuum. In developing a rating method, Lesonsky used the method of measuring ongoing experiential functioning as developed by Greenberg (1983), but she specifically adapted this approach to capture the nature of experiential processes as defined by the organization of experience perspective developed by the Kaplans. Lesonsky divided the contact-confluence continuum into five sub-categories, i.e., contact, seeking, tentative, stable, and confluent, and described the behaviors defining each sub-category. Each of these five categories was described in detail in terms of the following qualities: how people organize their experience (e.g., whether they are willing or not to own their experience); the expressive style of speech (e.g., rapid versus slower speech); and the language useage (e.g., vague and distant versus concrete and specific) (Lesonsky, et al., 1986).

In order to generate samples of verbal expressive data, 20 couples performed an interactional Gestalt awareness exercise which was recorded on audio-tape. After performing the exercises, the couples were given questions to answer about the exercises. The ensuing answers and discussion about the exercises were also audio recorded, and this sample of interpersonal communication constituted the data that raters rated. Four trained raters then classified each unit or segment of the recorded conversations into one of the five points along the contact-confluence continuum.

In general, the results of the study supported Lesonsky's hypothesis that contact and confluence can be defined clearly enough so that independent raters can agree in classifying vocal behavior. However, Lesonsky noted that her results were hampered by the lack of "spread" in the ratings. That is, the observed ratings were heavily skewed, showing a preponderance of confluent interactions. The intermediate ratings as well as the contact category were not uniformly represented. In addition, the relatively low incidence of contactful activity may have been partially a function of the limited information available on the audio-tapes (i.e., the inability to observe non-vocal behavior such as body language, eye contact, etc.). Lesonsky also noted that her subjects may have lacked motivation to express themselves in "risky" and exploratory ways. However, as Lesonsky noted, the results

at least showed promise that such primary Gestalt concepts as contact and confluence can be operationalized (Lesonsky, et al., 1986).

This research has important ramifications for Gestalt therapy theory. The research represented the first attempt to operationalize and systematically test a Gestalt therapy construct. Lesonsky was able to define and describe contact and confluence adequately so that trained raters were able to reliably evaluate verbal and vocal behavior and classify it according to the categories that she described. However, it is important to note that while Lesonsky's study provided evidence for contact and confluence, her results were limited in several ways.

Lesonsky used a priori definitions of contact and confluence and trained raters to evaluate verbal and vocal behavior based upon five pre-defined points along the contact-confluence continuum. There are two major drawbacks in this approach. First, the ratings were made only on the basis of information available on audio-tapes: the information available to raters did not include non-vocal aspects of functioning that are also considered to be part of a person's holistic process. Second, there is the possibility that Lesonsky trained her raters to apply her definitions of contact and confluence. Thus, even though her raters were able to achieve reliability in using the five categories, there is a question as to whether they were actually classifying valid instances of contactful and confluent functioning. These considerations open the way for an alternative approach to first

arrive at consensually valid samples of contactful and confluent functioning and then to subject these to a broader analysis involving video as well as audio information.

Design of the Present Study

The major purpose of the present study was to operationalize and test the Gestalt therapy constructs of contact and confluence. The present study was designed to move beyond the work of Lesonsky by developing relatively "pure" samples of contactful and confluent functioning. Once these samples were selected the objective was to have independent raters identify the attributes of each mode of functioning. To arrive at "pure" samples, expert Gestalt therapists were asked to agree on actual examples of contactful and confluent functioning that raters subsequently evaluated.

The present study employed a method of using video data as well as audio data. Videotaped segments of people interacting were obtained so that both auditory and visual information would be available in discerning the attributes of contactful and confluent functioning. Furthermore, in the present study contact and confluence were examined simply as dichotomous, bipolar constructs rather than on the basis of the five-point scale described by Lesonsky (1983). The results of Lesonsky's work suggests that her procedure did not produce an adequate method of discriminating contact and confluence throughout the proposed five-point range. Therefore, it was assumed that it is more important to discover the concrete behaviors that discriminate

the end points of contact and confluence before attempting to identify other possible positions along the continuum.

Potential Usefulness of the Present Study

The present study bears on some important theoretical issues and also has relevance to issues of immediate practical importance. From a theoretical perspective it is important to determine whether experiential processes exist as directly observable phenomena. The underlying issue is whether experience exists as a primary human process. That is, do experiential processes actually exist, or is experience a secondary, derived, epi-phenomenon? Gestalt therapy theory appears to stand apart from other theories of human functioning in postulating that the actual process of human functioning takes place at an experiential level (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1985). That is, organizational processes function in terms of how a person experiences rather than in terms of the kinds of discrete or specific functions that are generally observed. Evidence of the existence of such experiential processes would encourage further development of a non-linear view of human functioning as a valid theoretical direction and would support Gestalt therapy theory in particular.

The study also has relevance to diagnostic and training procedures in the application of psychotherapy, In both diagnosis and training, one of the greatest difficulties is that the generally accepted concepts and methods are directed toward formulations based on clusters or categories of behavior rather than on actual processes

of functioning. The theoretical formulations in common use lend themselves to gathering information and discovering how a great deal of minutiae fit together to form the general "contours" of what is to be observed and dealt with in psychotherapy (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1985). There are no models or concepts that facilitate therapists in observing "what is happening" in an immediate experiential sense even though experienced diagnosticians and trainers report that this is the basis of their actual work (Strupp, 1957). The validation of constructs such as contact and confluence would support further work in this area, and the scale being used in the present research might be further developed for use in diagnostic and training methods.

Statement of the Problem and Hypotheses

The neglect of the empirical validation of Gestalt therapy constructs in favor of developing therapy techniques has been a major problem in the acceptance and utilization of Gestalt therapy theory. Gestalt constructs such as contact and confluence have been described extensively but there have been very few attempts to formally specify and operationalize these concepts. The present research was undertaken in order to develop a method for operationalizing the Gestalt therapy constructs of contact and confluence which will lead to the further delineation of the observable elements that comprise these processes.

This research is based upon the assumption that contact and confluence exist as discrete and distinguishable phenomena, that is these constructs are used in a consistent manner by professionals who

are either followers of or at least well acquainted with Gestalt therapy. Thus, it is assumed that experts in Gestalt therapy will arrive at consensual agreement with respect to which segments of behavior exemplify relatively clear samples of contact and confluence.

The first hypothesis emerges out of this premise. Raters using an appropriately derived rating scale, will rate the samples that experts have agreed on in a differentiated manner. That is, the constructs of contact and confluence will be rated in a reliable manner by the raters.

Hypothesis 1: Independent raters will agree on behavior descriptions that apply to contact and those that apply to confluence.

The second hypothesis pertains to the validity of the concepts involved. Do the ratings of the confluent segments and contact segments differ along the behavioral dimensions as postulated by Gestalt therapy theory?

Hypothesis 2: Using a rating form based on Gestalt therapy assumptions that describe and define contact and confluenct raters will significantly differentiate between specific aspects of verbal and non-verbal behaviors that characterize contact and confluence.

Chapter II

Method

The purpose of the present study was to operationalize and validate Gestalt therapy theory constructs of contact and confluence. The method was designed to allow Gestalt therapy "experts" to select samples of functioning that they deemed to be relatively "pure" episodes of contact and confluence. These samples were then examined by independent raters to determine what specific elements discriminated between the two processes.

Brief Overview of Phases of Study

This study was conducted in three phases.

Phase I. In order to generate samples of contactful and confluent functioning, five dyads were videotape recorded as they took part in an awareness exercise and then engaged in a discussion of the exercise.

Phase II. Three experts in the practice of Gestalt therapy independently viewed the discussion portions of the videotapes and selected segments that they believed clearly exemplified the process of contact and those that clearly exemplified the process of confluence. The experts were then brought together and agreed on a selection of the "best" or "purest" segments. Two segments of contact and two segments of confluence were selected for each dyad.

Phase III. Four other persons, using a specially developed rating form, independently rated each of the segments on the 15 behavioral dimensions postulated by Gestalt therapy theory as distinguishing between contact and confluence.

Experimental Subjects

The dyads. Ten people volunteered to participate in a study that was described to them as "research in communication." These volunteers were arranged into five pairs. Four of the dyads consisted of pairings among fellow employees at Mental Health Services/North Central (MHS/NC) in Cincinnati, Ohio. One dyad was a newly married couple who were not employees of the mental health center. It should be noted that one dyad had to be eliminated because the experts were unable to find evidence of contact on the videotape of their functioning. Another dyad was substituted for the one that was dropped. The dyad that was eliminated was composed of co-workers at MHS/NC. They were replaced by other MHS/NC co-workers. They were videotaped while performing a Gestalt "awareness" exercise taken from Stevens (1969).

The experts. The experts who were chosen to view the videotapes were selected in accordance with the following criteria. First, they were required to have at least an M.A. in psychology or and M.S.W. in social work. Second, they were required to have at least two years of psychotherapeutic experience. Finally, each expert was selected only if he or she was able to assure the experimenter that he or she was able to recognize confluent and contactful interactions as defined by Gestalt therapy. On the basis of these criteria, one female and two males were chosen. One male possessed an M.S.W. in social work, and the other two experts had Ph.D.s in psychology.

The raters. Four individuals selected on a volunteer basis from

among the staff of Mental Health Services/North Central served as raters. Because the task of the raters was to observe highly specific concrete behavior it was believed that the people who were selected should not be adherents of a particular psychological theory that might predispose them to an interpretive bias. Three women and one man were selected; they ranged in age from 21 to 38 years. One of the women was employed as a nurse and possessed a bachelor of science degree. One of the women had an M.A. in education and worked as a mental health educator. The third woman had an M.B.A. degree and was an administrator. The man had a bachelors degree in accounting and was employed in that capacity.

Apparatus

The equipment used for the videotaping was a 1984 Hitachi video-cassette recorder (VCR).

The Rating Form

A rating form containing 15 behaviors was developed for the present study. The behaviors were derived from descriptions of contact and confluence as presented by both early and more recent Gestalt theorists. A seven point scale was designed in which a "7" rating indicated contact while a "1" rating indicated confluence. The rating form and its development are described in more detail later in this section.

Procedure

Phase I. Each dyad set up a separate appointment time with the

experimenter. At the appointed time, the two participants were escorted to the videotape-observation room at Mental Health Services/North Central. The experimenter explained that they would engage in a Gestalt therapy "awareness" exercise so that the experimenter could gather information about different communication patterns. The experimenter obtained each individual's verbal consent to have the videotape (and typed transcript) viewed by three Gestalt experts and four raters. The participants were encouraged to be as "natural" as possible in order to avoid "artificiality." After an initial discussion covering the procedure to be used, each dyad was instructed to do the awareness exercise (See Appendix A). On completion of the exercise they were asked to follow instructions that guided a "process" discussion (See Appendix B). The purpose of adding this "processing" portion was to allow free play to an interactive process. They were instructed to take as much time as they needed. The experimenter then turned on the videotape equipment and left the room. At the conclusion of the discussion portion, each dyad turned off the videotape equipment and let the experimenter know that they had finished. The experimenter then explained the purpose of the study and answered any questions that arose.

The awareness exercise, adapted from Stevens (1969), was selected to facilitate an interaction process within each dyad. The exercise asks the partners to make statements to one another, beginning with "I assume that you" or "I assume that you know." The complete instructions for the "I assume" exercise, as well as the guidelines provided to the

dyads for processing the awareness exercise, are contained in Appendices A and B.

Phase II. Each expert met with the experimenter individually to review the videotaped segments and to receive a typed transcript containing the corresponding verbatim dialogue. The experimenter instructed each of the experts to view the videotape of each dyad in order to identify when contact and confluence were occurring and to note these selections on their typed transcript. The complete instructions to the experts are described in Appendix C. Every expert viewed all of the videotape material at least twice.

In order to select the "purest" samples of contact and confluence for each dyad, the experimenter assembled the experts in a meeting. At this meeting, each expert described which segments he or she believed constituted contact and confluence and explained why. The videotaped episodes were replayed if the experts desired. If there were more than two samples of contact and/or confluence for a given dyad, the experimenter encouraged the experts to agree on the "best" segment. The experts all agreed that one dyad performed the exercise in "too businesslike" a manner and, hence, none could find any evidence of contact. As mentioned above, this couple was then eliminated from the study. The experimenter replaced this dyad with another than was able to produce both contactful and confluent interactions. After discussing each interaction, the experts were able to choose by consensus the two most contactful and the two most confluent segments for each dyad. The segments ranged from 45 to 90 seconds in length. The ten

samples of contact and ten samples of confluence that were selected constituted the data that the raters scored. The verbatim dialogue of the dyads is contained in Appendix D.

Phase III. Before viewing the videotaped segments that were to be rated, the rating task was reviewed with the raters (see Appendix E). The raters were told to observe each videotape segment very carefully in order to identify observable elements of functioning, paying particularly close attention to changes that might be occurring. Then they familiarized themselves with the rating form and had an opportunity to ask any questions they had about the form or the rating task.

In order to facilitate the raters in rating the actual behaviors of one person rather than risking that they would focus on an interactive process, each of the raters was asked to rate only one person in each of the segments -- either the person on the right or the one on the left. This was carried through consistently, that is, each rater was randomly assigned to the task of rating only the person on the left or the one on the right in each of the segments that he or she rated. Each rater completed 20 rating forms: two episodes of contact and two episodes of confluence for one member of each of the five dyads.

The order of presentation of the various segments was randomized. The experimenter showed each videotape segment as often as the rater required. The experimenter did not proceed to the next segment until each of the raters indicated that he or she had completed the present

segment. In addition, the experimenter interviewed each of the raters after he or she had completed this task in order to obtain a more detailed description of what criteria were used while completing the rating form.

Rationale and Development of the Rating Form

Although numerous scales designed to measure experiential functioning have been reported (Klein, Mathieu, Gendlin, & Kiesler, 1969; Wexler, 1975; and Greenberg & Rice, 1981), none has been based on Gestalt therapy theory and none has been developed to examine the specific processes of contact and confluence. One scale was specifically designed to test a Gestalt therapy concept (Nelson & Groman, 1975). Nelson and Groman focussed on the quality of language that subjects used and how changes in this quality occurred as subjects engaged in Gestalt "exercises." These researchers measured the use of personalized language in their study but did not relate their findings to the concept of experiential process.

The distinction between a scale that measures experiential functioning and one that measures experiential process requires clarification. Scales of "experiential functioning" refer to measures of what people are experiencing. For example, voice quality or degree of emotionality in verbal content are indicators of "experiential functioning." Three scales are specifically noted to measure changes in quality of "experiential functioning" (Klein, et al., 1961; Rice, Koke, Greenberg, & Wagstaff, 1969; Wexler, 1975). However, while evidence of changes in "experiential functioning" may be assumed to reflect the functioning of hypothesized experiential processes, this kind of

support is indirect; it does not provide evidence of a process per se. What is required is a scale that is derived in terms of how a hypothesized process is supposed to function and how this process will manifest itself. The present study was designed as a step in the direction of specifying the nature of the processes and locating the relevant overt behavioral indicators of such processes.

The design of the rating form was based on the theoretical assumption that a person functions as a process of experiential organization. This premise has been described as derived from the early Gestalt position, especially as developed by Perls, et al. (1951) and as later elaborated by Kaplan & Kaplan (1982, 1985), Lesonsky (1983), and Lesonsky, et al. (1986). Two general principles underlie the experiential process formulation: (1) a person is functioning holistically or as a unitary process, and (2) the nature of this process is organizational. That is, the process functions as its own means of self-maintenance as a cohesive and stable organizational entity.

In many cases the items selected for the present study correspond to variables that are related to other theoretical frameworks, for example, communication theory (Gottman, Markman, & Notarious, 1977; Peterson, 1979; Scoresby, 1975). However, as such items are used in other contexts they are assumed to have specific signal properties or communicative meaning. As used here they are not assumed to have such special significance. Instead, the selection of items reflects an effort to tap the whole of functioning from a variety of vantage points, each reflecting some aspect

of the principles of experiential organization. These vantage points are described as follows:

Emphasis on whole person functioning. Perls (1947,1973) and Perls,et al. (1951) emphasize the importance of observing the whole individual in order to understand ongoing experiential processes. In this regard, Perls (1973) states:

> Everything the patient does, obvious or concealed, is an expression of the self. His leaning forward and pushing back, his abortive kicks, his fidgets, his subtleties of enunciation, his split-second hesitations between words, his handwriting, his use of metaphor and language, his use of 'it' as opposed to his use of 'you' and 'I', all are on the surface, all are obvious, and all are meaningful (p. 75).

Passons (1975), one of the later writers who has described Gestalt therapy, noted that a primary goal of the individual is to achieve a wholeness that is "comprised of feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and the physical body whose processes cannot be divorced from the more psychological components" (p. 20). Passons discussed the non-verbal behaviors necessary for self awareness. He cited the need for awareness of body posture, voice inflections, facial expressions and gestures if an individual is to be more contactful. The importance of non-verbal behaviors is a fundamental tenet of Gestalt therapy theory: "Every behavior emitted is an expression of the person at the moment. In

fact, regardless of what a person is doing, it is impossible for him not to be expressing himself" (Perls, et al., 1951, p. 101).

Emphasis on exploratory-stable functioning. The more recent Gestalt theorists discuss contact in such terms as exploring, risking and ownership, and confluence as activity that occurs as relatively mechanical, rigid, and indirect (Iesonsky, et al., 1986). These are qualities of organizational activity from the perspective of an ongoing whole process that is continually changing and yet remaining in a stable relationship to its environment.

Behaviors included in the rating scale. The present rating scale attempted to include behaviors that are assumed to be present during contact and confluence as described by both the early and later Gestaltists. Also, the scale was designed to provide an adequate range in order to detect and discriminate these aspects. Based upon these principles, 15 items,which included body language, content of speech and style of speech,were included on the rating form. The following provides a brief overview of the behaviors that were included on the present rating form. A complete description of the 15 variables is contained in Appendix F.

The body language items were selected to examine eye contact, facial expression, head movements, posture, arm and hand movements and leg and feet movements. These behaviors were selected in order to encompass a wide range of observable body movements.

The speech items included indications of assuming

responsibility, use of speech, content of speech, expression of need, interpersonal risk, receptivity to feedback and time frame. For example, "time frame" refers to whether individuals discuss what is happening between them in the present versus the past or future. These items were intended to reflect the Gestalt assumption that contact is demonstrated when individuals actively and with awareness take responsibility for their own functioning as expressed in speech content referring to the immediate present and to recognition of personal involvement. Thus, content of speech items included such things as whether the individual used the pronoun "I" indicating that he or she took responsibility for his or her statements versus using "you", "they" or other pronouns that designate the action as externally based. Taking responsibility for oneself and taking risks to express oneself are all behaviors assumed to be contactful (Nelson & Groman, 1975).

Both Lesonsky, et al., (1986) and Perls, et al., (1951) described contact as a process of excitement and self discovery that is often observed in the manner in which individuals express themselves vocally. The rating scale incorporated items designed to examine both tone and speed of speech. Thus, tonal quality as well as speech tempo may reflect the way in which a person is "experientially focussed" or functioning in a relatively pre-formed manner.

Finally, Gestalt therapy describes the contact process as centered in the present time and is exemplified by being able to respond to

feedback given by another individual (Perls, et al., 1951). There is thus a need to differentiate references to immediate experience in contrast to "the past" or "the future."

The rating form included six items designed to examine body language, seven items designed to examine the content of what was verbally expressed in an interaction, and two items designed to examine the style in which an individual spoke. All of the items were viewed as conforming to Gestalt therapy theorists' beliefs that an individual's entire behavior, both verbal and non-verbal, is different when the individual interacts contactfully versus when he or she interacts confluently.

In order to measure each item a seven point scale was used. A score of ("1") represented very confluent functioning, a score of ("4") indicated neither contactful nor confluent functioning and a score of ("7") represented very contactful functioning. For example, for the "Tone of Speech" item, a "1" on the scale was intended to reflect an individual speaking in a monotone, whereas a "7" would indicate when an individual varied his or her speaking tone. Both of the end points of each item of the scale were described in concrete, illustrative terms.

Items were chosen for the scale that exemplified the Gestalt approach that "...views the functioning of the person as existing as the whole of his or her currently active experiential processes. Whatever processes that are currently active -- thoughts, actions, muscle tensions, emotions...etc. -- are all mutually interactive and constitute the whole. Actually, a more accurate way of describing

holistic functioning is to say that processes do not exist as discrete phenomena but as embedded in a system of experiential organization; they exist as they function in relationships" (Kaplan, et al., 1985, pp. 687-688).

The objective was to select observable behaviors that would be assumed to be associated with contactful functioning. Confluent functioning, as noted earlier, would be assumed to be the polar opposite of contact. The intent was to specify the observable behaviors that comprise contactful functioning and the rating form was designed to constitute a behavioral description of contact.

In keeping with the above description, it is necessary to specify the 15 behavioral elements that were assumed to be essential for contactful functioning.

Quality of eye contact. Contactful eye contact was described as direct, consistent (assertive) eye behavior; eye behavior that neither avoids or stares at the other individual.

Quality of facial expression. This item was based upon the assumption that during contact, an individual's facial expression will match the emotional content of the idea(s) being expressed.

Quality of head movement and position. Head movements and position were included with the expectation that an individual involved in a contactful interaction will indicate his or her involvement via nodding appropriately as the conversation is occurring.

Quality of body posture. Posture that is relaxed and leaning forward to indicate attention to the partner was defined as contactful posture.

Quality of arm and hand movements. Gesturing to add emphasis to the conversation and the absence of nervous gestures such as nailbiting and rigidly folded arms was thought to represent contact.

Quality of leg and feet movement. Legs relaxed and crossed loosely was used to indicate contactful functioning on this dimension.

The preceeding six items were all designed to enable individuals to observe changes in body movement that would indicate contact. The following two items were included to identify contact from observable ways in which individuals speak.

Speed of speech. Contactful speaking was defined as thoughtful, well-paced and reflective as opposed to very rapid speaking.

Tone of speech. Tone of speech that included much tonal variation and spontaneity was considered contactful rather then speaking in a monotone (confluent).

The following seven items examined the content of what was said in each interaction. These included:

Responsibility. Contactful behavior was exemplified by the individual stating that he or she was responsible for his or her own thoughts, feelings, etc.

Use of speech. Closely related to responsibility, contactful use of speech could be further recognized by an individual who used the personal pronoun "I" rather than the more impersonal "you," "they," etc.

Content of speech. Concrete, specific content that was geared to the partners understanding was defined as contactful content of speech.

Expression of need. Contactful behavior was indicated when the individual was able to make "I want," or "I need" statements as opposed to confluent "I can't" or "I won't" statements.

Interpersonal risk. Making genuine self disclosing statements was defined as contactful while the absence of self disclosing behavior was defined as confluence.

Receptivity to feedback. Contactful behavior was defined as requesting feedback and/or listening to feedback when it was offered. Confluent behavior was defined as not asking for feedback and not listening when it was offered.

Time frame. An individual speaking about what was occurring in the present was seen as contactful while speaking about the past or future was seen as confluent.

It was believed that contactful functioning on all 15 of the preceeding variables would provide a behavioral defninition of contact.

Pilot Use of the Rating Form

In order to establish whether the rating form was understandable and suitable for this research, a pilot group of five individuals, not otherwise used in the study, observed a videotaped episode of a dyad engaged in a Gestalt awareness exercise. The raters then evaluated the couple using the 15 items which were included on the present form. The purpose of the pilot study was to discover if the rating form could be clearly understood by the raters.

The raters used in this pilot work were all masters level counselors employed by Mental Health Services/North Central. The counselors were asked to observe a videotaped episode of a dyad engaged in a Gestalt awareness exercise. They observed the dyad engaged in two videotaped exercises judged by the experts as contactful and two videotaped exercises judged by the experts as confluent. After each episode, the experimenter asked each of the raters to rate each episode using the rating form. The experimenter replayed each of the episodes at least twice so that the raters could evaluate the episode using the rating form. No formal statistical analysis of the findings was performed. The five raters reported no difficulty in understanding the rating form items or in rating the quality of the dyads' interactions using this rating form. These data were not used in the study itself. The final rating form as used in the study is presented in Appendix F.

Data Analyses

Interrater agreement. In order to examine interrater agreement, percentages of agreement were calculated for each of the 15 items included on the rating form. Interrater agreement was examined for both contactful and confluent episodes for all 15 rating categories.

Discriminating Contact and Confluence

In order to examine whether the ratings for contactful and confluent interactions were significantly different for each of the 15 variables included on the rating form, *t*-tests were performed. Since there were only two levels of the independent variable (i.e., contact and confluence) and the independent variable is

nominal and since the dependent variable (i.e., the 15 rating form variables) was measured on an interval scale, then the t-test is the appropriate statistic to be used for the data analysis (Tuckman, 1978). Additional analyses were used to indicate which, if any, of the 15 variables on the rating form significantly discriminated contactful from confluent functioning. A discriminant function analysis was also performed in order to determine if any combination of the 15 variables significantly discriminated contact and confluence. This statistical procedure enabled the researcher to examine which variables in some composite would be indicative of contact and which would be indicative of confluence.

For the purpose of the present study, we were interested in discovering what combination of the 15 rating form variables best discriminated contactful from confluent functioning. The 15 variables in an of themselves were not of interest because they are similar quanitative measures. For example, it is of little practical value to know that "Speed of Speech" was significant at the $p < .01$ level. Our goal was to see if there was a difference between contact and confluence with respect to the 15 rating form variables. Then, if a difference is found, then what can we say about the relative importance of the 15 rating form variables? The discriminant analysis finds if any of the variables used combine together to discriminate contact and confluence. This analysis tells us the relative contribution of each of the 15 variables.

Chapter III

Results

The presentation of the results are organized with respect to the two hypotheses. The first hypothesis proposed that independent raters, using the present rating form, will agree upon the verbal and non-verbal behaviors contained in these videotaped segments. The second hypothesis was that independent raters will rate the segments designated as contactful significantly differently from those segments designated as confluent.

Expert Agreement

While no formal statistical analyses were performed, it was necessary for the experts to agree upon videotaped episodes of contact and confluence in order to test the above two hypotheses. Since this assumption is critical to the results of the two hypotheses, the findings will be included here. It was found that each of the experts independently selected two segments of contact and two segments of confluence for each of the five dyads. When all three experts were brought together in order to select the clearest or purest samples of contact and confluence, they quickly agreed upon which two episodes best exemplified these two processes for each of the five dyads. They also agreed that one of the original dyads had not produced evidence of contactful functioning (and this pair was replaced). The researcher asked about the basis of the experts's judgments. These questions consisted of "open-ended" probes rather then specific points to be checked. When asked what

constituted the most important factor that influenced their selections, the experts reported that they based their judgments of whether a videotaped episode was contactful or confluent primarily on their "clinical intuition." When asked if they could specify what behaviors led them to classify interactions as confluent or contactful, the experts all reported that they could clinically "sense" when contact and confluence were occurring rather than being able to specify what specific behaviors led to their choices.

Interrater Agreement

Four raters were used. Two raters were randomly assigned to rate each of the individuals who appeared in the videotaped segments selected as representing contactful and confluent functioning. Agreement between the raters was then analyzed based upon the ratings of the 15 variables included in the present rating form. Interrater agreement for each variable was calculated as the percentage of agreement between raters for identical video information. For the purpose of the present study, and based upon standard statistical practice, agreement between the raters was defined as occurring when the two ratings were within one point on the seven point scale used for the rating form. The choice was made to report percentages of the reliability of rater scores instead of the Pearson *r* because there were four ratings made on each of ten videotaped episodes of contactful and confluent functioning. Pearson correlations can only be obtained between the ratings of two individuals. Thus, for this study, we examined the total number of agreements

divided by the total number of observations. This is the standard statistical procedure for calculating agreement when there are multiple ratings.

The percentage of interrater agreement is shown in Table 1. Column 1 indicates the percentage of agreement among the raters for all of the rating form variables when raters rated contactful episodes. For example, the variable "Quality of Eye Contact" indicates that there was 70% agreement among the raters on all of the videotaped episodes that were evaluated by the experts as constituting contact.

Similarly, Column 2 shows the percentage of agreement among the raters for all of the rating form variables when raters rated confluent episodes. For example, the variable "Quality of Eye Contact" indicates that there was 90% agreement among the raters on all of the videotaped episodes that were evaluated by the experts as constituting confluence.

Column 3 shows the percentage of agreement for the contactful and confluent episodes combined (i.e., the mean of the first two columns). Thus, for the "Quality of Eye Contact" variable, the agreement among the raters for both contactful and confluent episodes was 80%.

These results indicated that the agreement between raters on both contactful or confluent episodes across all 15 variables was 70%. There was very little difference between the raters' average agreement on the episodes designated as contactful (68.9%) and the episodes designated as confluent (71.2%). There was a range of agreement from a low of 45% on the "Receptivity to Feedback" variable during contact to 90% agreement

Table 1

Percentage of Interrater Agreement on the Variables Included on the Rating Form

Rating form	Percent agreement contact	Percent agreement confluence	Percent agreement for contact and confluence combined
Quality of eye contact	70.0	90.0	80.0
Quality of facial expression	67.5	80.0	75.7
Quality of head movement and position	72.5	70.0	71.2
Quality of body movements	65.0	87.5	76.2
Quality of arm & hand movements	65.0	70.0	67.5
Quality of leg & feet movements	52.0	67.5	59.7
Responsibility	75.0	72.5	73.7
Speed of speech	80.0	62.5	71.2
Use of speech	85.0	57.5	73.7
Tone of speech	82.0	72.5	77.2
Content of speech	62.5	77.5	70.0
Expression of need	70.0	77.5	73.7
Interpersonal risk	57.5	55.0	56.2
Receptivity to feedback	45.0	60.0	52.5
Time frame	85.0	67.5	76.2
Overall agreement	68.9	71.2	70.0

on "Quality of Eye Contact" during confluence. These results are also presented at the bottom of Table 1.

The reliability ratings appear to be satisfactory for a task of this nature. In their comments after completing the rating task the raters reported that, in general, they found that they could easily accomplish the rating task and believed that they could rate each individual accurately. However, they also reported that they found it quite difficult to make fine gradations (e.g., to score a "7" or a "6") on a particularly contactful segment.

It is difficult to be entirely certain when interpreting agreement between raters. On a simple task, the 70% rater agreement obtained would be considered rather low. Because of the rater's report that the present task was very difficult, the agreement obtained represents a very high level of consensus.

Differences Between Contact and Confluence

The second and most critical hypothesis in line with Gestalt therapy theory assumptions was that independent raters would rate contactful episodes as significantly different than confluent episodes. In order to test this hypothesis a t-test was performed on each variable in order to compare the mean ratings of the contactful and confluent episodes.

The t-test data presented here is the first step in a discriminant function analysis which was the primary analysis of this study. In the discriminant analysis, the variables with the largest coefficients are identified. This analysis gives us an equation of which variables

group together to discriminate contact from confluence. Before the discriminant analysis is completed, the 15 variables are entered into a discriminant equation in a stepwise fashion. In essence, the first step in this procedure is the completion of separate independent t-tests on each of the independent variables. However, these separate t-tests do not account for experimentwise error rate and do not account for any relationship among the independent variables. Experimentwise error rate is the probability of endorsing a false conclusion, which is similar to the Type I error. The problem of experimentwise error is compounded when an experiment involves multiple tasks, such as in the present study. In other words, in any t-test analysis there is a much greater chance of (falsely) finding significance because of the many computations involved in this analysis.

Therefore, these independent t-tests, while reported here, are of very limited value. Their only utility is to provide a "first glance" at what each of the rating form variables, by itself, might contribute to the discrimination.

At a cursory level it could be argued that a dependent t-test analysis might provide more appropriate information, considering that the 15 rating form variables were certainly interrelated. However, dependent t-tests would focus attention on the individual 15 variables instead of on how the variables combined to discriminate contact from confluence. In addition, a dependent t-test would not be able to account for the experimentwise error rate that would occur in such an analysis.

Finally, from a pragmatic viewpoint, the low levels of significance found in the independent t-test analysis would not be any greater in a dependent analysis. However, most importantly, a dependent t-test analysis would focus the results of the study on the separate significance of the 15 rating form items instead of emphasizing the combination of items, which was the intent of the present study.

These results of the t-test analysis are listed in Table 2. Column 1 lists the mean values given by the raters for each of the rating form variables during contactful episodes. For example, on the rating form variable "Quality of Eye Contact," the average rater score was 5.10. Thus, 5.10 represents the average rating for all of the contactful episodes across all five dyads on the "Quality of Eye Contact" variable. Column 2 lists the mean values assigned by the raters for each of the rating form variables during confluent episodes. For example, on the variable "Quality of Eye Contact," the average rater agreement was 5.05. Columns 3 and 4 show the standard deviations obtained for the contactful and confluent episodes, respectively.

Column 5 lists the t-value for each of the 15 rating form variables. The results indicate that "Interpersonal Risk" was the only variable that significantly differentiated between contact and confluence ($p < .02$). In addition, "Receptivity to Feedback" approached significance ($p < .08$).

In order to determine if any combination of the 15 variables on the rating form was able to discriminate between contact and confluence,

Table 2

Mean Ratings, Standard Deviations and *t*-test Results Related to Comparisons of Contactful and Confluent Episodes

Variable	Mean value for contact episodes	Mean value for confluence episodes	Standard deviation for contact episodes	Standard deviation for confluence episodes	t Value
Quality of eye contact	5.10	5.05	1.46	1.13	0.29
Quality of facial expression	5.00	5.08	1.34	1.18	0.70
Quality of head movement & position	5.10	5.10	1.37	1.17	0.00
Quality of body posture	4.80	5.05	1.24	1.01	0.97
Quality of arm & hand movements	4.70	4.78	1.45	1.12	0.66
Quality of leg & feet movements	4.35	4.40	1.58	1.50	0.21
Responsibility	5.12	5.02	1.36	1.14	0.12
Speed of speech	5.40	5.12	1.28	1.11	1.05
Use of speech	5.30	5.25	1.42	1.35	0.26
Tone of speech	4.98	4.78	1.19	1.16	0.57

(table continues)

Table 2

Mean Ratings, Standard Deviations and t-test Results Related to Comparisons of Contactful and Confluent Episodes

Variable	Mean value for contact episodes	Mean value for confluence episodes	Standard deviation for contact episodes	Standard deviation for confluence episodes	t Value
Content of speech	5.55	5.10	1.18	1.36	2.51
Expression of need	5.10	4.75	1.32	1.35	1.37
Interpersonal risk	5.20	4.30	1.59	1.54	6.62*
Receptivity to feedback	4.98	4.32	1.73	1.56	3.11
Time frame	5.38	5.28	1.55	1.32	0.96

*$p < .02$

a discriminant function analysis was performed. This analysis indicated that only two variables contributed to a significant discrimination. The combination of "Interpersonal Risk" and "Use of Speech" correctly discriminated contactful from confluent interactions in 68.8% of the cases.

It was expected that the discriminant function analysis, utilizing the 15 variables, would show significant differences between contact and confluence. The results of this analysis indicated the the combination of only two rating form variables was able to discriminate contact from confluence. While "Interpersonal Risk" and "Use of Speech" were found to significantly discriminate between contact and confluence in 68.8% of the cases, this is not a strong finding. Any two variables, by chance, would discriminate contact from confluence 50% of the time. In order to have moderate confidence that two variables in combination, discriminate, one would want at least an 85% prediction level. An extremely strong significance level would be 95%. Thus, "Interpersonal Risk" and "Use of Speech" were the most predictive of the discrimination between contact and confluence. However, because of the very weak level of predictability, very little can be deduced about the importance of these two variables. Thus, results obtained are insufficient to confirm the second hypothesis.

Order of Videotape Presentation

The order in which the raters first viewed the episodes of a particular dyad may have significantly influenced their subsequent ratings of that same dyad. That is, if a rater initially rated a contactful interaction between dyad members, his or her subsequent ratings of the following three episodes of the same dyad may have been influenced in the contactful direction.

In order to rule out the possibility that the order in which the raters viewed the videotape episodes influenced their subsequent ratings of the following three episodes, further analyses were performed. Segments in which a rater viewed the contactful episode of a particular dyad first were compared to those segments in which confluent episodes were viewed first. Then, the average scores on all 15 rating form variables for the contactful segments that were viewed first were compared to the average scores for each of the confluent segments on all 15 of the rating form variables when the confluent scene was viewed first. Thus, on every episode in which a rater saw a contactful segment first was compared to the scores the raters assigned to each of the episodes when he or she viewed a confluent episode first.

The results of this analysis indicated that no sequence effects were evident. The mean score of subsequent ratings was 5.45 when a contactful episode was viewed first, and 5.30 when a confluent episode was viewed first. It thus appears that the raters rated individuals relatively high regardless of the order in which they reviewed the episodes.

Effect on Ratings of the Subject's Activity Level

Differences between observations of contact and confluence may have been masked by having raters rate only one person of each dyad. This factor may be important because it appears that in the contactful interactions one of the individuals often appeared to behave more actively (verbally and non-verbally) than his or her partner who

tended to assume a relatively passive orientation of listening and encouraging his or her partner to continue to explore the subject at hand. In view of the fact that the ratings for both partners were classified together as contactful, it is possible that the ratings for the partners who assumed the more passive positions might have lowered the ratings for contactful episodes as a group.

In order to examine this possibility, all of the contacful episodes were reviewed in order to identify which individual was behaving more actively and which individual was "listening." The results were then examined across all 15 rating form variables to determine whether the more actively behaving individual received significantly higher scores than his or her listening partner. The results of this analysis indicated that the "more active" individual was indeed rated significantly higher (more contactful) than the "listener" on the following behaviors: "Quality of Eye Contact" ($p < .01$); "Quality of Facial Expression" ($p < .05$); "Quality of Body Posture" ($p < .05$); and "Receptivity to Feedback" ($p < .01$). It is difficult to explain why only the preceeding four variables differentiated the actively behaving individuals from the listeners. It could be that the raters were better able to observe body language variables because of the greater number of movements that would occur in an active individual. Thus, eye contact, posture, and facial expression would tend to be more salient when an individual was engaged as an active speaker in an interaction than when an individual was more "passively"

facilitating another individual to discuss his or her feelings. This same reasoning would explain why the "Receptivity to Feedback" variable was significantly higher for the actively behaving individual. That is, it is logical to assume that the active behaver in the interaction, by virtue of being the individual who is speaking more frequently, would be seen by the raters as responding more visibly to the comments made by the facilitator (listener).

It must be noted that overall there was no significant difference between the means for the "listener" and those of the "more active" individual across all 15 behavior categories included on the rating form. The mean for the actively behaving individuals was 5.19 while the mean for the active listener was 4.95. It appeared that the raters rated most of the individuals at the high end of the scale regardless of whether the individual whom they rated was the active behaver or the active listener.

Summary of Results

The results of this study indicated the Gestalt therapy experts were able to observe dyads on videotape and agree upon selection of "pure" samples of contactful or confluent functioning. In addition, independent raters were able to use the present rating form in a way that shows an adequate degree of agreement in their ratings of the 15 variables included on the rating form (Hypothesis 1). However, data from the t-tests, as well as from the discriminant function analysis, did not support the hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) that

the independent raters would rate functioning higher during contactful versus confluent functioning. Post hoc analyses did not indicate that the order of the presentation of the episodes or the quality of activity of the participants affected the results.

Chapter IV

Discussion

The present study was designed to operationalize and test the Gestalt therapy constructs of contact and confluence. The results that were obtained do not support the most critical hypothesis that independent raters are able to observe contactful and confluent interactions in a discriminating manner. This failure to find positive results raises certain questions. Although the design of the study provided for discrete samples of confluence and contact it is possible that these samples do not adequately reflect the constructs as they are used in clinical work. It may be that these constructs are not amenable to operationalization and systematic study. And finally, if they are indeed amenable to study, in what way or ways was the present study inadequate and in what ways can further research better pursue the goal of systematic study? This section will examine these questions.

Contact and Confluence May Not Be Operationalizable

Are contact and confluence operationalizable? To help answer this question we will examine the nature of the constructs as well as review several procedural concerns.

The early Gestalt therapy theorists (i.e., Perls, et al., 1951) described contact and confluence but, as has been noted, did not relate the constructs in a systematic manner and made no attempt to operationalize them in terms of specific behaviors. Although we have found that a variety of factors contributed to a neglect of formal definitions, it can also be argued that there is something about the

nature of these processes that makes it extremely difficult if not impossible to translate them into operations that are amenable to systematic study. Earlier we recognized that unlike concepts that are based on linear theoretical models, Gestalt therapy concepts have been described as referring to active processes that are (a) embedded in holistic functioning, and (b) continually changing. Both of these factors make it difficult to arrive at clearly definable operations. It may be therefore that contact and confluence are processes that can only be recognized via functioning that may be described as "clinical intuition." This line of thinking suggests that contact and confluence may be so embedded in a changing "whole" of ongoing functioning that to attempt to isolate and examine these processes in terms of distinct elements takes them out of context and reduces or destroys their validity. In this view, contact and confluence may be processes that can only be identified by a clinician as he or she is participating directly in an interaction and directly experiencing the interaction process, that is, intuitively.

While it is accurate to state that the ways in which contact and confluence have been typically described in Gestalt literature have been phenomenological, it is nevertheless difficult to support the contention that these concepts cannot be operationalized. The fact that our experts reported no difficulties in selecting and agreeing on which samples they deemed to constitute contact and confluence suggests that they are recognizable as discrete and isolatable ways

of functioning. However, we also noted that when asked to comment on the basis of their selections, the experts pleaded that their procedures were "intuitive." It seems likely that our experts have developed their perspective and their skills in training settings where these concepts were described in phenomenological language and that they have not been trained in locating specific criteria. To develop this kind of focus was our primary purpose.

It is a less serious error to assume that contact and confluence can be operationalized when they cannot, than to assume that these concepts are too intangible to be operationalized when they are actually operationalizable. If we mistakenly assume that these constructs cannot be operationalized, we might prematurely discard an important route of exploration and examination, thus losing potential understanding of the way in which individuals function.

Examination of Difficulties and Errors in the Method Employed

While it is possible that the constructs of contact and confluence are not operationalizable, it seems more profitable to consider that certain aspects of the present study may have contributed to the lack of positive findings. Various methodological issues will be discussed in terms of how they may have contributed to the lack of significant findings. We shall examine each of these in detail.

The Length of the Videotape Segments

Videotaped sequences were selected to range from 45 to 90 seconds

in length. This time limit was established in order to maximize the possibility that the experts would be able to agree upon two samples of contact and two samples of confluence for each dyad, and to omit portions that "diluted" the purity of samples. However, the relatively short duration of the videotaped episodes may have made it less likely that the raters could observe relevant differences in the verbal and non-verbal behavior of the dyads. That is, since the resulting videotaped episodes were relatively short, raters may not have had adequate opportunity to notice subtle behaviors, such as quality of eye contact.

The relative shortness of the segments may also have facilitated raters in making biased or "contaminated" ratings. A rater may have given an individual a high rating believing that the individual would have shown, for example, high quality eye contact, if he or she had more time. Also, it is possible that longer videotaped episodes would have given the raters more verbal and non-verbal data to observe and thus made the contrast between contact and confluence more obvious. Thus, it is possible that the short duration of the videotaped episodes may have led the raters to focus on only one or two salient behaviors of the individual that he or she was rating, rather than on other, more subtle behavioral differences than may have occurred. In line with this reasoning, it has been noted that the "Interpersonal Risk" item on the rating form examined behavior that may have been more obvious and striking. This was the only variable that, by itself, differentiated

contact from confluence on the rating form used in this study. Both the t-test data and the results of the discriminant function analysis indicated that the "Interpersonal Risk" variable significantly differentiated contactful from confluent functioning. An obvious question is whether this item on the rating form reflects some aspect of functioning that stands out in some way. The "Interpersonal Risk" item was designed to examine an aspect of functioning involving "exploration" and "discovery" of self-experience. The "Content of Speech" item primarily examines a quality of focussing on one's personal experiential involvement in the immediate present. It also implies a quality of empathy or sensitivity that one individual expressed with respect to the other person. The qualities of behavior reflected in these two items may have been especially apparent to the raters when they occurred so that the presence or absence of the behavior was clearly noted.

The short duration of each videotaped episode may also have led the raters to focus relatively more on what they recognized as the most dominant aspect of each videotaped interaction. Focussing on this more "dominant" quality of behavior may have led them to de-emphasize other less clear or less focal aspects such as body language or style of speech.

Social Desirability Bias

A major indicator of "error variance" is that the scores obtained were predominantly at the "high" end of the rating scale. A social

desirability bias is suggested to be at work here. The rating form was designed so that contactful episodes would presumably be given higher scores ("4" to "7") while confluent episodes would be given lower scores ("1" to "3"). It was found that on all of the 15 rating form variables the lowest score assigned by the raters was only 4.30, which indicated neither contactful nor confluent behavior. When differences were found on a particular variable, such as "Interpersonal Risk," the differences were in how much higher contact was rated above the midrange and never how much lower confluence was rated below the midrange. For example, if the full range of the scores was used, it was expected that the mean score for the variable "Quality of Eye Contact" would be in the "1" through "3" range during confluent episodes and in the "5" through "7" range for contactful episodes. Instead, the mean score for "Quality of Eye Contact" during contact was a 5.10, but the mean score for confluent episodes on the variable was a 5.05.

It appears that the raters may have rated the episodes toward the higher ends of the scales because they were inclined to rate in a more "positive" manner. Thus, the scores that were obtained were "high" or at the relatively "high" end of the scale because of a presumed social desirability factor that was not controlled in the design of the study. The subjects who were viewed on the videotapes were almost all acquaintances and colleagues of the raters in their work setting.

The raters may have felt that to rate their colleagues lower on the rating form may have indicated that their colleagues were not able to engage in what might be viewed as "positive" behaviors, for example, to make good eye contact or to take interpersonal risks.

The factor of social desirability may have been augmented by the duration of the video segments. Thus, while the raters may have had inadequate information on which to base their ratings, they may have allowed themselves to "err" in the direction that was least discomforting, or toward the "high" side..

The Rating Form

While efforts were made to select items for the rating scale that were based on a wide range of descriptions of contact and confluence as found in Gestalt therapy literature, it is possible that the items selected were not adequately salient or the behavioral indicators that were specified did not provide a valid basis for discriminating contact and confluence. It is possible that the categories included on the rating form were too broad. For example, it was assumed that relatively direct eye contact is a component of the construct of contactful functioning. However, it seems possible that contact and confluence can both occur when an individual shows direct eye contact. Perhaps "direct eye contact" is not the essential difference and there are more subtle eye behaviors that could discriminate between contact and confluence that the raters were unable to distinguish when using this rating form.

The category "Speed of Speech" may serve as another example. Perhaps it is not the speed of speech per se that differentiates contactful from confluent functioning. Instead, there may be something about the way in which the speed of speech changes during a contactful interaction that makes it more contactful. It may be that contact is marked by a wide variation in the pace of speaking while confluence is characterized by speed of speech that is quite consistent during the interaction. The rating scale did not allow for these possibilities. While the term "too broad" reflects these difficulties, it may also be said that the categories are by themselves too constraining and require some kind of situational and contextual specification.

A related concern is that the one-to-seven scale may have had insufficient descriptive anchor points for raters to identify the subtle behavioral differences that are needed to differentiate contactful from confluent functioning. If, for example, a 10 point scale was used, there may have been relatively more of a range for raters to identify behvaioral differences when using the rating form, especially if further descriptive material was included at one or more intermediary points. A scale with descriptive anchor points only at the extremes, such as the one used here, may not have allowed the raters to identify finer gradations of differences between contact and confluence.

As noted earlier, it is possible that a social desirability factor

affected the raters so that they tended to rate individuals higher or in a more "desirable" direction. This possibility is compounded by the fact that the dyads that were rated were colleagues of the raters. That is, raters may have subtly and with little or no awareness, leaned in the direction of more positive ratings and this inclination could have been supported by the uniform layout of the rating form. The 15 items were uniformly scaled from left (confluent, low scores) to right (contact, high scores). Raters may have adopted a rating bias that was facilitated by this quality of the rating form. Such a rating bias would "dampen" the effects of the factors being studied.

Obtaining "Pure" Samples of Contact and Confluence

If the results of this study had confirmed the influence of the independent variables (contact and confluence), there would be no need to speculate about the adequacy of our samples in terms of purity. Since this was not the case, the issue must be considered.

Although the experts had no difficulty selecting samples that they deemed to represent contactful and confluent functioning, a major question remains as to whether the videotaped episodes that were selected represented an adequate sample of these processes. Similarly, although the experts agreed that certain interactions were confluent, it is not clear that these confluent

episodes were of adequate quality across all five dyads. Of course we do not expect all samples to be equivalent but there is a concern whether some are less "pure" than others and whether this is to a meaningful degree that affects the ratings.

It may be that the raters' tendency to score behavior in the contact range (e.g., "5" to "7" on the rating form) was partially a result of the fact that they did not observe adequately "pure" or clear samples of contact and confluence. Thus, even though the experts were able to agree upon whether an interaction was contactful or confluent, it is not clear whether all the experts found these episodes to be "pure." If the samples of contactful and confluent functioning were not clear enough to serve as adequate bases of these processes, then the raters might more easily have yielded to other factors that governed ratings, such as social desirability, and simply rated all episodes high (i.e., contactful).

Overview of Methodological Issues

In any systematic research the results are due to a variety of influences, some specifically controlled and some that are "residual" or "error" influences. We have noted that in the present study the results are not accounted for by the controlled variables, that is they are not found to be statistically related to the influence of selected samples of contactful and confluent functioning. Instead,

the results appear to fall into what may be called "error" variance. But "error" merely refers to sources of variation that are unintended and, as they are large, tend to obscure the hypothesized effects of the controlled variables. It is always difficult to account for "non-significant" results since there are generally no simple tests to specify which "error" is actually functioning and at what strength. Thus, this analysis has been speculative but may be valuable in developing suggestions for more refined approaches.

Comparison with Lesonsky's Study

The present study, like that of Lesonsky (1983), was designed to operationalize the Gestalt therapy theory constructs of contact and confluence. However, while the two studies pursued complementary courses, both studies produced less than optimal findings. Lesonsky used a method in which she developed a priori operational definitions of contact and confluence and then trained observers to apply these criteria to verbal and vocal data. Lesonsky found limited support for her hypothesis that trained observers could agree on their recognitions of contactful or confluent functioning.

In contrast, the present study attempted to arrive a behavioral discriminations of pre-selected samples of contact and confluence. The results of this study did not support the proposition that contact and confluence can be operationalized in this way. This discussion has identified many possible explanations for the lack of differentiation between contact and confluence in this study.

Since both the present study and Lesonsky's (1983) fall short of the goal of definitively operationalizing contact and confluence,

perhaps a new approach based on the experience of both of these studies might be more successful in achieving the desired results. It is useful to examine aspects of both studies to discover a promising direction.

A primary problem is that both studies attempted to define contact and confluence on the basis of the literature alone. Lesonsky did this in terms of determining how raters were to locate observed behaviors on a pre-specified contact-confluence continuum. She used definitions of contact and confluence based primarily on the writings of the Kaplans and then trained judges to observe contact and confluence based upon these a priori definitions. The present study used the literature of the earlier and later Gestalt therapy authors in order to deduce qualities of behaviors that were implied by the various descriptions of contact and confluence. In this study, while the samples were pre-selected and were rated in terms of constructs derived from the literature, the actual discriminations were to be derived. Thus, in both cases, the results that were obtained were primarily based upon an attempt to translate existing descriptive information in order to identify the necessary behaviors assumed to be operating.

Neither Lesonsky nor the present researcher began her or his investigations by interviewing Gestalt therapy practitioners in order to understand how a practitioner might identify contact and confluence in actual observations. This procedure might be carried out in

conjunction with viewing videotapes of actual clinical episodes in which the therapists are interviewed and asked to explore their experiences of selected portions. It seems that this preliminary step, omitted in both studies, could provide more information with which to pursue the goal of successfully operationalizing contact and confluence. This may not be an easy procedure. It has been noted that Gestaltists, as well as other therapists, are not inclined to convert their clinical constructs into careful discriminating behavioral observations. However, the fact that the judges appeared to agree in their selections of segments of contact and confluence suggests that there are consistent factors at work.

Directions for Future Research

The main issue remains the difficulty in identifying in a systematic manner those processes that Gestaltists classify as contact and confluence. Although practitioners are not inclined to make the kinds of specifications required for systematic research, a beginning can be made by extensive interviewing and repeated viewing of selected samples along with efforts to have "experts" progressively refine the basis of their "clinical" operations. An extended period of pilot work may be required for this step.

The issue of what kind of behavioral data to use is critical. There is some question raised in both the present study and that of Lesonsky regarding the motivation of subjects. In order to achieve a wide range of functioning, the subjects whose functioning is to be

observed may require special conditions to prepare themselves to function more freely. They may need to be processed through a "training" or "warm-up" phase, or alternatively, videotapes of actual clinical work might be utilized in the research itself.

Finally, the rating method must be carefully developed through extensive pilot work. Progressive expansion of the scale and progressive elimination of items is called for. Essentially the present study suggests that the effort to define and operationalize contact and confluence is at an earlier or more pioneering level than had been anticipated.

Appendix A

Instructions for "Assumptions" Exercise

You will now be involved in a communication exercise. While facing each other and maintaining eye contact, alternate making statements to each other that begin with the words "I assume that you" or "I assume that you know." Don't discuss these assumptions or say anything that doesn't begin with the words "I assume that you." You will get a chance to discuss or respond to these assumptions later. Do this until I tell you to stop. If you get stuck, just say the beginning of the sentence again and see what words come to you. The sentences should begin "I assume that you" or "I assume that you know." The videotape is only for research purposes and will be kept confidential. Are there any questions?

Appendix B

Guidelines for Processing the Awareness Exercise

1. Talk to each other about how you feel now that you have finished the exercise.
2. Would you close your eyes and notice how you feel at this moment, and talk to each other about the exercise that you've just done. When you're ready, share with each other your feelings.
3. What part of the "I assume" exercise was most meaningful to you? Tell each other what was most meaningful to you.
4. Take a few moments to be aware of what you're feeling right now. Tell each other what you're feeling.
5. Talk to each other now about how the exercise felt risky for you?
6. Did you discover anything about yourself or your partner in doing this exercise? Tell your partner what you discovered.
7. Take a few moments to be aware of what you are thinking or feeling right now. Tell each other what you're feeling.
8. Is there something you've become aware of that you would like from your partner? Can you tell each other what you would like?
9. Is there something you've become aware of that you feel your partner would like from you? Now share with your partner what you think he or she would like from you.
10. Take a few moments to be aware of what you are feeling right now. Tell each other what you're feeling.
11. What is it like for you to do this exercise? Share this with your partner. Describe to your partner how you are feeling now.
12. Take a few moments to reflect. Is there anything more that either of you would like to say to each other? Say it now.

Appendix C

Instructions to the Experts

The task is to assign each individual segment to either the contact or confluence category. You, the experts, are to examine each segment with respect to quality or organization, expressive style, and language useage, and all three aspects should be considered in combination in arriving at a single judgment for that particular segment.

The content of the transcripts was derived from subjects' responses to a series of questions following their participation in a Gestalt "awareness" exercise. It is these responses that make up the content of the transcripts that you will be judging. It is essential that you watch the videotapes in conjunction with the typed transcripts since expressive style is one important dimension on which you will base your judgment.

You are to code each segment on your transcript into either confluence (CF) or contact (CT). However, if a particular segment does not fit into one of the categories it may be left unscored. Do you have any questions?

Appendix D

Verbatim Dialogue of the Dyads

Dyad 1 - Contact Episode 1

Person on right: I was surprised, I I don't know if it was most meaningful, but that's what struck me, that when I said that I assumed that I had forgotten how I felt then I remembered our conversations about our feelings about each other.

Person on left: I remembered when we were talking about couples being together.

Person on right: Oh Yeah, that's it, this was meant for you to remember it.

Dyad 1 - Contact Episode 2

Person on right: While I am trying to be honest, I am finding it hard to be honest.

Person on left: Right.

Person on right: I am not trying to play any games. I am trying to be consistent, but I am struggling.

Person on left: The thing that I don't like was I felt I was like under a microscope.

Dyad 1 - Confluence Episode 1

Person on left: I don't feel very much different.... I really noticed that fan.

Person on right: I didn't notice it until you just mentioned it.

Person on left: Oh yeah, I felt kind of relaxed and tuned in on that fan.

Person on right: I was feeling relaxed and I was also feeling.... aware that I was being filmed.

Person on left: Awkward being filmed.

Person on right: Yeah, awkward being filmed and awkward about what I am feeling. These spontaneous feelings are unnatural.

Person on left: The camera for Terry's exercises is disturbing.

Dyad 1 - Confluence Episode 2

Person on left: Glad we've finished.

Person on right: Glad we had a chance to talk with you earlier.

Person on left: Yes, that conversation was more pleasant.

They exchange words not discernable as it is the end of the tape.

Dyad 2 - Contact Episode 1

Person on right: It was interesting. I learned that you knew an awful lot about me (both laugh). I don't know if that was good or bad. I knew a lot about you that I could not express.

Person on left: Now what could that be.

Person on right: Because, I don't know how I felt, that's what I know about you, you told me in confidence and I don't want to tell anyone, even you. I just, just in case there is somebody listening. I didn't feel confident enough to say anything. I was a little cautious.

Person on left: I want to thank you for that.

Dyad 2 - Contact Episode 2

Person on right: This is uncomfortable. There's no room. I don't know if he is really listening to this. What do you want from me. What I think you want from me.... a little less of the personna. Now it's your turn.

Person on left: I understand what you're saying. It's hard for me to express my feelings.

Dyad 2 - Confluence Episode 1

Person on right: Touch what you are feeling (much laughter by both).

Person on left: Keep it clean.

Person on right: I feel hunger, fatigue (laughs), stupidity (both laugh) can you hear me out there guys, I don't know, interesting I guess. I don't feel much. I try not to.

Person on left: I'm just wondering how far this is going to go (laughter).

Dyad 2 - Confluence Episode 2

Person on left: Still wondering what the next question is going to be.

Person on right: I guess I'm just feeling, I don't know, I'm not feeling any different.

Person on left: I don't regret volunteering for this.

Person on right: No, no I don't either. I think it has been fun. Possibly educational. And if it can help Terry, go for it.

Person on left: Is there something that you have become aware of

Person on left: that you would like from your partner? Can you tell each other what you would like?

Person on right: I would like a Reeces Pieces right now.

Dyad 3 - Contact Episode 1

Person on right: (Mutters) O.K., Hm, Hm. Some of the feelings are still I think kind of a strangeness and artifically, sitting across from one another and, uh, forcing a question... I think that once the exercise got going that we were really in to it. We weren't just doing him a favor.

Person on left: Hm, Hm. I think that I feel the same way. I think that the exercise got in the way of conversation. I found it maybe a little frustrating. On the other hand, if we hadn't of had the opportunity to do the exercise we probably wouldn't have had the chance to talk since our paths don't cross.

Dyad 3 - Contact Episode 2

Person on right: Yet on the other side I am feeling that the questions are moving us in a little bit of a direction like what you think the other person wants. Where all of a sudden we're getting off the I assume questions and things like that. We are actually talking more about the content about what we were talking about earlier and still making some assumptions without assumming. Projecting a little bit into your thinking, doing some risky

Person on right: work there too but I guess the feeling level right now is glad it's drawing near to an end and glad that for the exercise as I said before. We wouldn't have taken the time probably until we had to meet about some client somewhere along the line.

Person on left; Hm, Hm.

Dyad 3 - Confluence Episode 1

Person on left: Did you discover anything about your partner or yourself in doing this exercise? Tell your partner what you discovered. Hm. Well, let's see, I think, rediscovered your moving. I forgot about that and, I don't know, I mean rediscovered a sense of connection that there are a few areas of work, we worked together on different things and when we start talking about work, and the things that we knew about in common, we discovered those areas that we worked on.

Person on right: I discovered that you still had an interest in Administration. I guess when I heard your news that you were leaving and what you were going to do you had enough of management kind of things and I made an assumption probably that you were burnt out in that kind of things, so I was glad - really, honestly, that this was all part of a plan and this management/and administration is not beyond you because I think you have talent.

Dyad 3 - Confluence Episode 2

Person on right: And I appreciate the validations before - again as we mentioned before that some of the assumptions were right and two of us that don't get into - we don't see each other that often in the agency, you know that we share some commonality, and interests that go beyond that. Go beyond the clients. I wish you well.

Person on left: O.K.

Person on right: As you move on.

Person on left: Thank you.

Person on right: Goodbye.

Dyad 4 - Contact Episode 1

Person on right: Yes, I felt during that time it was frustrating in some ways. I didn't know whether we were following the directions or the way we are interpreting. It didn't leave for any follow through on the assumptions. That part was hard.

Person on left: What was the most meaningful thing about the I assume exercise? It is a difficulty of assumming anything anyway and the presumptionous of it.

Person on right: I guess what was most meaningful, that it was hard, that would be the most meaningful part. I am feeling embarrased that I got you into something I didn't know,

Person on right: even now, what it was about. (laugh)

Dyad 4 - Contact Episode 2

Person on right: I was getting a little annoyed at having to be paying attention to every other minute of what I was feeling. I began to feel repetitive.

Person on left: Did you expect any changes or did you find any changes between times...?

Person on right: Yes, I have each time I felt something different.

Dyad 4 - Confluence Episode 1

Person on right: While we were sitting here I was aware of the fact that you looked at the tape recorder and I assume you are looking at the tape recorder every time it makes a little noise. I would like you to tell me why you are doing that?

Person on left: Ha, Ha. I am, you tell me what you would like now. Am I suppose to answer that?

Person on right: No you don't, maybe that is the next one.

Dyad 4 - Confluence Episode 2

Person on left: Is that what you are feeling right now? (sigh) I feel like time is not passing.

Person on right: Like time is not passing?

Person on left: Hm, Hm.

Person on right: Since we are on T.V., I felt like I am being (the thought of) being destroyed. (laugh) What is it like?

Dyad 5 - Contact Episode 1

Person on right: I feel like I wish we had our conversation a long time ago.

Person on left: Yeah, I agree. I feel even sadder when I close my eyes because I'll miss seeing you and I like talking to you and I wish I knew you better.

Dyad 5 - Contact Episode 2

Person on right: I love you (to person on the left).

Person on left: I felt that from you. I really care about you, too. In the staff meeting today you looked like your head was down and you were having trouble with something. Were you having trouble with something when Randi was talking?

Person on right: No, it must have been hard for you to be there, and I thought if I was in your position, I wouldn't have been there.

Person on left: Well, I was just wondering what was inside of you. I always wanted to know more about you. I care about you, I think. Like we said before what do you think the other person wants from you? ....I thought it would be nice to know how you gave up that other part of you, about that struggle you went through and I felt that You are older than me in that way. Maybe that is why

Person on left: I like you so much too. It is hard.

Person on right: Not as hard as it was.

Person on left: I want to cry a lot but not willing to do it in front of you.

Dyad 5 - Confluence Episode 1

Person on right: What was most meaningful to me was that we know some way to escape our surroundings. That is hard to do. That is hard to do. And it was nice being in a small area. Not worrying about everything.

Person on left: Can't get much smaller than my office.

Dyad 5 - Confluence Episode 2

Person on left: I don't know.

Person on right: I feel conceited to say anything like this. Well, I think we talked about friendship....

Person on left: I was going to say it more in terms of what you would like to go out and talk.

Person on right: Hm.

Appendix E

Instructions to the Raters

You are about to see 20 videotape segments of couples performing an "assumptions" exercise. Please watch the videotape very carefully. After you have seen the first videotape, you will be asked to rate the person on the left/right, based upon the 15 categories contained on this rating form. (The experimenter then hands the rater the rating form.) You may play the videotape as often as you like, you may stop the videotape or rewind it if you like. I will play the first videotape episode until you have completed the rating form. We will follow this procedure until you have rated the person on the left/right on all of the videotape episodes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Appendix F

The Rating Form

Quality of Eye Contact

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Inappropriate level of eye contact e.g., avoids eye contact or stares continually; unfocussed gaze, dull or bored gaze

Appropriate level level of eye contact, e.g., direct & consistent, avoids staring

Other observations:

Quality of Facial Expression

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Facial expression does not match emotion being expressed, e.g., inappropriate smiling, frowning

Facial expression matches emotion being verbally expressed e.g., smiling, frowning etc., varies facial expression with content of conversation

Other observations:

Quality of Head Movement & Position

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Inappropriate movement, e.g., rapid, shaking inappropriately or very still

Appropriate head movement & position nodding appropriately with conversation flow

Other observations:

Quality of Body Posture

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Posture that is hunched over or very rigid; stiff; not facing partner

Posture that is relaxed, leaning, slightly forward or backward, facing partner

Other observations:

Quality of Arm and Hand Movements

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hair twisting, no gesturing, extremely exaggerated gesturing or frequent nervous gesturing such as arms folded tightly, nail picking						Use of hands and arms to interact with speaker, e.g., gesturing slightly to add emphasis to conversation content; absence of nervous gesture

Other observations:

Quality of Leg and Feet Movements

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Feet held rigid on floor or very stretched out, feet crossed tightly; rapid, nervous foot movements						Legs relaxed, crossed loosely, slightly separated

Other observations:

Responsibility

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Describes self as a victim of others' feelings, thoughts, etc.						Describes self as responsible for feelings, thoughts, etc.

Other observations:

Speed of Speech

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very rapid talking						Thoughtful, well-paced, reflective speaking

Other observations:

Use of Speech

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Much use of "you" or "they"						Use of "I" primarily

Other observations:

Tone of Speech

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Speaking in a monotone; no variation of tone; "canned speech"						Variation of tone speaking about what is occurring at that moment, spontaneous approach to conversation

Other observations:

Content of Speech

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vague or abstract with little empathy toward partner						Concrete, specific and geared to partner's understanding

Other observations:

Expression of Need

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of "I can't" or "I won't" statements						Use of "I want" and "I need" statements

Other observations:

Interpersonal Risk

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Absence of self-disclosing statements						Makes genuine self-disclosing statements

Other observations:

Receptivity to Feedback

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Does not ask for feedback; does not appear to listen to feedback when given						Requests feedback and/or listens to feedback when given

Other observations:

Time Frame

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Speaking about past or future						Speaking about what is occurring in the present

Other observations:

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